

15 October 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: 1968 Infiltration

The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam has prepared the following monthly estimates for the first eight months of 1968:

January	23,200
February	10,200
March	25,800
April	22,900
May	27,400
June	27,200
July	28,400
August	32,000
Total	<u>197,100</u>

Although there are a number of difficulties in making monthly estimates of NVA infiltration, we believe that MACV's monthly estimates are the correct order of magnitude. We believe, however, that the sum of these 1968 monthly estimates -- about 197,000 -- is not really the best estimate for the eight month period as a whole. Although we cannot apportion by month, we believe as many as 40,000 additional infiltrators may have arrived. This gives us an Agency estimate of 200,000-240,000. We believe DIA's estimate for this period is 210,000.

We believe that the evidence concerning the level of infiltration during September and so far in October is inconclusive. We have observed 16,200 who should arrive in September and 8,700 who should arrive in October. Actual infiltration is certainly higher but we have no way of judging the exact figures.

In September, four infiltration groups, possibly five, with an estimated strength of 2,300 were detected in intercepted communications. So far in October, two, possibly three infiltration groups have been noted. No strength figures are available for these groups. These groups will arrive in November and December.

Our best judgment is that the pace of entry into the infiltration pipeline has probably dropped below the declining rates seen in June and July -- an average of some 18,000. We believe, however, that the rate is still well above the rate indicated by the number of groups detected in September and October.

~~SECRET~~DECREASE IN INCIDENTS

During the first two weeks in October there has been a marked drop in the number of attacks per week as contrasted with the preceding six weeks' total. (See chart below.)

The number of ground attacks mounted by the enemy is the principal indicator of his aggressiveness. It should be noted that the period covered by the chart begins with the initiation of the third phase of his general offensive on 18 August.

<u>PERIOD</u>	<u>NO. OF ATTACKS</u>	<u>TOTAL NO. OF INCIDENT</u>
18-24 August	91	585
25-31 August	65	486
1-7 September	58	492
8-14 September	40	560
15-21 September	58	653
22-28 September	50	572
29 Sept. - 5 Oct.	32	510
6-12 October	36	538

The current downward trend in attacks is a phenomenon which has been observed more or less consistently after an extended period of intense offensive activity by the enemy. Thus between the Tet attacks, the 1st phase of his general offensive and the beginning of the 2nd phase of the general offensive in early May we see a period of fewer attacks and general avoidance of combat by the enemy. A parallel situation is also observed between the end of June, the end of the 2nd phase, and the beginning of the 3rd phase in mid-August. We once again apparently have moved into a period in which the enemy avoids combat, withdraws to remote areas where he can refit and resupply in comparative safety. Whether this current period of fewer attacks presages a period of renewed intensive offensive activity remains to be seen.

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22 October 1968

TROOP DISPOSITIONS - SOUTH VIETNAM

Since mid-September and continuing to date, a major repositioning of NVA and VC main force units has been noted in sigint. It now appears that from 18-20 regimental size units may have moved either into NVN or into base areas along the border or well into Laos and Cambodia. If the 18-20 regiments were at normal strength as many as 30,000 men could be involved in this movement. However, due to having combat losses (22,000 KIA since mid-August), sickness and wounded, these units are probably far from being at their "normal" strengths. It should be noted, though, that there is no reason for supposing that those units noted in movement from SVN were the only ones to sustain casualties. In other words, while some of the units that moved may have been badly mauled, they were not all completely decimated. Allied operations, bad weather, supply problems, and sickness contributed to these withdrawals. The VC, however, retain the capability of resuming offensive operations on short notice and sigint and collateral reports indicate that the enemy continues to plan for offensive operations.

I CORPS:

The HQ MRTTH and its subordinate 6th and 9th Regts displaced to Laos in mid-September. The NVA 138th and 270th Regts moved north across the eastern DMZ in late September. In late September - early October, the NVA 320th Div and its three subordinate regts, the 48th, 52nd, and 64th, plus the NVA 164th Arty Regt have moved N of the Ben Hai River. In addition, there are now tenuous indications that the NVA 803rd Regt may now be located in NVN.

II CORPS:

Since mid-September, the HQ NVA 1st Div and at least two subordinates, the NVA 66th and 320th Regts have withdrawn to Cambodia. Collateral sources, not sigint, indicate that the 95C and the 101D Regts have also withdrawn to Cambodia. Additionally, the NVA 95th, 18B Regts and the 40th Arty Regt are in Cambodian sanctuaries to which they had moved just prior to the redeployment of HQ 1st Div.

III CORPS:

In III CTZ the Hq NVA 7th Div is now located in the north central Binh Long Province - Cambodian border area; 5th VC Div in NE Tay Ninh Province - Cambodian border area; the 9th VC Div in west central Tay Ninh Province - Cambodia border area. Four NVA Regts, the 32nd, 141st, and 165th Regts and the NVA 96 Arty Regt and two VC Regts the 271st and 272nd have moved to the Cambodian border area. NOTE: While these moves to safe areas have occurred, the HQ NVA 1st Div has moved from II Corps and is now located in the NW Binh Long Province - Cambodian border area of III Corps. This movement would seem to indicate a strengthening of forces in this Corps area in preparation for a renewal of hostilities.

IV CORPS:

There are no NVA units in IV CTZ. reports indicate that VC units have pulled back from population centers and seem to pose no immediate threat at this time.

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COMMENT:

In view of the difficulties the VC have experienced in recent months as noted in para 1, the present lull in fighting can probably be attributed to the necessity to have units regroup and be resupplied and not to any intent to cease hostilities.

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Comparative Estimates of Organized Enemy
Strengths in South Vietnam, 31 July 1968

MACV (30 June)

CIA (31 July)

Combat Forces

VC/NVA Main and Local Forces

NVA

VC

Administrative Services

Guerrillas

Subtotal

134,300

114,300-129,400*

(99,714)

(77,400)

(34,700)

(49,700)**

33,875

30,000-40,000

61,873

50,000-70,000

229,000

194,000-239,000

171,000-187,000

160,000-180,000*

127,000-137,000

(115,000-130,000)

(47,000-50,000)

60,000-80,000***

80,000-110,000

311,000-377,000

200,000-370,000

Other Irregular Elements

Assault Youth

Self Defense Forces

Subtotal

Not

Quantified

10,000-20,000

80,000-120,000

90,000-120,000

Political Infrastructure

Professional Cadre

Supporting Staffs

Subtotal

Total

75,000-85,000

75,000-85,000

10,000-30,000

75,000-85,000

85,000-115,000

314,000

269,000-324,000

511,000-577,000

475,000-625,000

*The CIA estimate includes the 308th Division and excludes the 304th. The MACV estimate includes the 304th and excludes the 308th.

**This figure includes about 13,000-16,000 NVA soldiers serving in VC units.

***It is estimated that about 25 percent (15,000-20,000) of these are NVA personnel.

NOTE: (1) Due to the nonavailability of MACV's strength figures for the month of July, CIA's estimate must be preliminary. The CIA estimate of VC/NVA Main and Local Forces has been increased 10,000-20,000 based on increase in the rate of infiltration and generally lower casualty rates.

(2) MACV estimates the total NVA presence in South Vietnam to be from 93,000-96,000; CIA estimates it to be from 120,000-130,000.

127,000-137,000

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Material used in private briefing of Senator John C. Stennis
on 23 October 1968 by Mr. John Maury.